Whitehall, where a scaffold had been erected outside a second-floor window. Crowds braved the bitter January weather to watch the decapitation from nearby rooftops, marveling at the doomed king's courage as he knelt by the executioner's block. It is said that Charles called himself “a martyr of the people,” forgave his enemies, and gave the signal himself for the executioner to strike. It is also said that he wore two shirts on the day of his execution in order to be sure he didn't shiver and appear to be nervous. When his head was chopped off, many in the crowd groaned in disbelief.

The execution of the king was a shock to the English and to others as well. No European monarch had ever been tried and executed by his or her own people. The precedent was now established that a ruler who attempted to exercise absolute power without the consent of the governed could be punished.

**Oliver Cromwell and the Puritan Regime**

With the Rump Parliament in power, the monarchy, the Church of England, and the House of Lords were abolished and a Commonwealth was established based on Cromwell's idea for a republic. Opposition to Cromwell continued, however. In 1653, he dismissed the Rump Parliament, called a new Parliament (the Barebones Parliament), and assumed the title of Lord Protector. By 1655, he had dissolved Parliament again and placed England under military rule with himself as dictator.

Charles I's son, also named Charles, and his supporters invaded England from bases in Scotland and Ireland but with little effect. In retaliation, Cromwell led his own invasion of Ireland in 1649 and 1650. By the time the fighting was over, as many as a third of the Irish people had been killed and as much as two-thirds of Irish lands were confiscated from their Roman Catholic owners and given to Cromwell's English Protestant, often Puritan, supporters. While Cromwell supported a policy of religious toleration for Jews and all Protestants except Anglicans, he persecuted Roman Catholics.

The Commonwealth was based on Puritan ideals. Like Calvin in Geneva, Cromwell sought to establish a moral, godly community of believers. Sunday was a day of prayerful observance, to be used only for religious services. Because reading the Bible was important to one's duty of examining one's conscience continually, Cromwell supported public education for girls as well as boys. Theaters and taverns were closed as distractions and obstacles to godliness. Dancing, gambling, maypole dancing, and other traditional festive activities were also prohibited.

**The Restoration, 1660**

Cromwell died in 1658 and it was soon apparent that without him, the harsh regulations of the Commonwealth could not hold the English public's loyalty. In 1660, a new Parliament, with the support of the army, asked Charles I's son to return and be crowned Charles II (1660–1685). This marks the beginning of a period in English history known as the Restoration. During the Restoration, England expanded its power and wealth through colonization and the development of international trade.

Under the religious settlement that ended the Puritan regime, the Church of England was reinstated and a series of laws passed between 1661 and 1665 limiting the activities of Puritans and Roman Catholics. They were allowed to practice
their religions, but could not hold membership in town corporations, which meant that they could not hold any local public office. A later law barred them from holding public office on the national level. The restrictions lasted until the early 1800s. As a result of these laws and the change in life in England, Puritans again emigrated as they had in the early 1600s. Many Puritans emigrated to Massachusetts during these years.

With the Restoration, the Puritan restrictions against the theater, dancing, gambling, and similar activities were lifted. Charles II was less interested in the politics of kingship than in living its good life, and was known as “The Merry Monarch.” He was notorious for his leisure activities, including riding, sailing, drinking, and cavorting with mistresses. More diplomatic than his father, he had better relations with Parliament for most of his reign, though there was some suspicion that Charles was secretly a Roman Catholic. Charles had no child to succeed him, and in 1681 Parliament tried to pass a law to keep his brother James, Duke of York, a Catholic, from succeeding him. Many Protestants feared that if James succeeded to the throne, he would try to bring Catholicism back. Charles dealt with this by dissolving Parliament and ruling without it until his death in 1685.

**James II and the “Glorious Revolution”**

When James II assumed the throne of England in 1685, he was a Roman Catholic monarch of a Protestant nation. When he married his second wife, he had converted from Protestantism to Catholicism, but his two daughters from his first marriage had been raised as Protestants. The eldest, Mary, was married to William III, Prince of Orange, in the Netherlands. The English expected that when James died, his daughter Mary would succeed to the throne. This would mean they would only have to endure a Catholic monarch for a short while. However, in 1688, James and his second wife had a son who automatically became first in line for the throne, thus assuring the continuation of a Roman Catholic monarchy.

Whether the monarch was Roman Catholic or not would have mattered less if James had not set about trying to restore Roman Catholic influence in England. He issued two declarations allowing freedom of worship for non-Anglican Protestants and Catholics. He also appointed Catholics to a number of high government and military posts. There was also concern that James would attempt to lessen the power of Parliament.

In 1688, Parliament, fearing the worst, invited Mary and her husband, William of Orange, to rule England. In the face of English hostility and the army that accompanied William and Mary, James fled to France. This became known as the Glorious Revolution, or Bloodless Revolution, because it was accomplished very easily, with no bloodshed. Of course, not everyone thought it was so glorious. The supporters of James, known as Jacobites (from the Latin form of James, Jacobus), tried several times to invade England and put James (or, later, his heirs) back on the throne. But they were never successful.

**Bill of Rights: Parliament Limits the Power of the Monarchy**

Before Parliament allowed William and Mary to be crowned, the new monarchs had to accept certain limitations on the power of the monarchy. In 1689,